

Mitch Evans Speed Demon

Words: Jamie Christian Desplaces

Image: Daniel Kalisz

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He may not be a household name just yet, but 18-year-old Mitch Evans is one of New Zealand’s hottest talents. Only one step from the dizzying heights of Formula One and the superstardom that it encompasses, Evans has already taken the world of motorsport by storm. Australian F1 driver Mark Webber has branded him as “exceptional”.

In 2011, Mitch became the youngest driver to win an international grand prix and last year secured the World GP3 Series championship. Earlier this year, he joined the GP2 circuit – Formula One’s feeder series – and came in third in only his second race. With that, he also became the youngest driver to ever make the GP2 podium. I ask Mitch if he expected his transition to the next level to be so smooth and instantly successful.

“I’ve always had faith in my own abilities, otherwise I wouldn’t be here,” says the friendly Aucklander who’s currently based in the U.K. “But to be honest, I was very surprised to have such a great first weekend and make the podium.”

They’re not so used to having Kiwis competing over there are they?

“No, I don’t think they are! There aren’t many of us over here so it’s unusual for them. I have a few European mates here who I socialise with when I can.”

He still has the same group of friends that he grew up with, he says, and I ask if he gets homesick being away for such long periods at a time.

“Not really, though I do miss my family. New Zealand is definitely my favourite country in the world but my goals aren’t there so there’s little point getting tied up with homesickness. I have a dream, and that is in Europe.”

It’s a dream that he has harboured since he first stepped into a kart, spending his childhood days in classrooms fantasising of Formula One success. Mitch never liked school, he tells me, leaving early to move overseas and further his racing career. He must feel he’s missed out on his youth, I say, and he agrees, for him the concept of youth existed only in age. He doesn’t regret it though, it was his choice, he states with the single-mindedness of a true champion. Determination, dedication and focus are the key to success, he tells me, and he clearly has those attributes in spades.

GP2 vehicles can reach in excess of 330km/h and I ask Mitch if he’s ever afraid out on the track.



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“Yes, absolutely. There’s obviously the speed and danger of crashing, but my biggest fear is that of failure.”

He trains his body daily to cope with the immense G-Forces involved and as for mental preparation, it comes with experience: “Your brain adapts to high levels of concentration, and after a while it just becomes normal.”

If he could race anyone in history, he’d choose Ayrton Senna and outside of his field, Mitch admires sportsmen who balance success and professionalism, singling out Roger Federer as a prime example. He is thankful to his sponsors and backers for their amazing support and also his fans with whom he enjoys interacting with on social media sites: “Even though I don’t have that many!”

He’s being modest of course. His Facebook page has over 5,000 ‘likes’ and on Twitter there are a thousand more following his every move. Not bad going. So when will we see him thundering around the track behind the wheel of an F1 racing car? “Soon, I hope!” is the succinct reply. “We hope so too,” is ours.